

Middle Lake Roosevelt Watershed, WRIA 58

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Middle Lake Roosevelt Watershed. This information provides a starting point for potential water users in determining the likelihood of obtaining a new water right for a future project or proposal in this area.

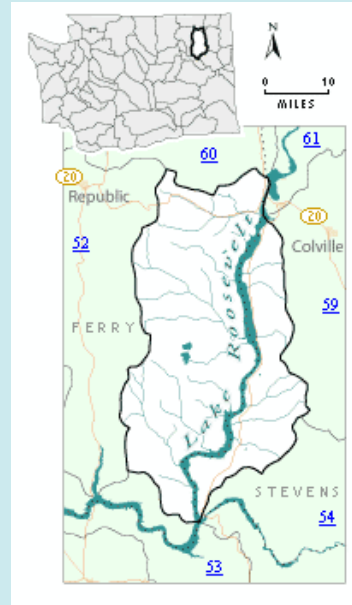
The Middle Lake Roosevelt Watershed located in eastern Washington includes that portion of Lake Roosevelt and its numerous tributary creeks and streams, lying upstream of the mouth of the Spokane River and downstream of the mouth of the Colville River. Lake Roosevelt is a reservoir on the Columbia River created by Grand Coulee Dam. The Columbia River originates in the mountains of Canada with many large tributaries from Idaho and Montana. The annual precipitation in the Middle Lake Roosevelt Watershed ranges from 10 inches per year near the mouth of the Spokane River to 30 inches in the higher elevations mountainous areas. Only a fraction of this precipitation becomes groundwater available for human and economic uses. Most of the precipitation arrives during the winter months, when water demands are the lowest. During the summer, the snowpack is gone, there is little rain, and naturally, low stream flows are dependent on groundwater inflow. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

Much of the water in the Middle Lake Roosevelt Watershed has already been spoken for. Increased demands from population growth, declining groundwater levels, and impacts from climate change are adding to the challenge of finding new water supplies in WRIA 58, especially during the summer months.

Factors affecting water availability

In 2004, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation filed notice with the Department of Ecology that the United States intends to make examinations and surveys for the utilization of the unappropriated waters of the Columbia River and its tributaries above Priest Rapids Dam, pursuant to Section 90.40.030 of the Revised Code of Washington.

MORE INFORMATION



Definitions

Adjudication: A legal process conducted through a superior court to determine the extent and validity of existing water rights.

Mitigation plan: A scientifically-sound plan intended to avoid impairment to existing water rights or capturing water from a closed source.

Surface water source limitations (SWSLs): A determination by State Fish and Wildlife that water is not available based on needs for fish. See RCW 77.55.050.

WRIA: Water Resources Inventory Area; also known as a watershed or river basin. For environmental administration and planning purposes, Washington is divided up into 62 major watersheds, or WRIsAs.

The withdrawal of these waters from future appropriations is currently in effect until December 23, 2014, with an exemption for a limited quantity of water. All new applications for surface water and groundwater connected to surface water, within WRIAs 58, 60, 61 and 62 are limited to a total of 38 cubic feet per second and 27,740 acre-feet per year. The withdrawal may be extended, and Ecology expects BOR to request an extension before the withdrawal expires.

Adjudications

Alder Creek, Corus Creek, Cheweka Creek, Jennings Creek, Harvey Creek, Magee Creek, O-Ra-Pak-En Creek, Quilisascut Creek, Stranger Creek are adjudications that have been completed within WRIA 58. An adjudication was begun but never completed for Hunters Creek. In general, most of the water in these adjudicated basins has been appropriated and new appropriations are not available. **These basins have annual water shortages.**

The Spokane and Colville Indian Reservations make up much of the lands located within WRIA 58. The Tribes are concerned about maintaining flows and fish habitat in the watershed and water right applications and mitigation plans are routinely sent to them for their review. Federally Reserved Rights are not quantified at this time and thus the legal availability of water in these areas is undetermined.

Groundwater

In general, availability and yield of groundwater from bedrock in this WRIA is very limited by climate and geology.

Surface Water

The Middle Lake Roosevelt watershed has administrative restrictions known as Surface Water Source Limitations (SWSLs), which limit most water sources in the watershed. Groundwater connected to the surface sources are also subject to SWSL restrictions. Often these restrictions will require that new water uses stop during low flow periods. These restrictions indicate that most water has been appropriated within tributaries to the mainstem of the Columbia River. In addition, portions of Ninemile Creek and the North Fork of Hall Creek are “closed” by SWSL, meaning the water body is closed to new uses.

Water supply available for further appropriation

The Middle Lake Roosevelt watershed is not closed to new water uses (appropriations). However, the majority of water has been appropriated and new uses are subject to the above listed restrictions.

In some situations, surface water applications for single in-house domestic use or stockwatering may be approved if no alternate source of water supply is available and the proposed use will not impair existing water rights.

Sullivan Lake Water Supply Project is an impoundment/reservoir of the Pend Oreille watershed. The Office of Columbia River is currently pursuing development of water supplies on Sullivan Lake to benefit instream and out of stream uses through storage, conservation, and regional water management agreements.

The Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release is an impoundment/reservoir of the Columbia River watershed. The Office of Columbia River is currently pursuing development of water supplies on Lake Roosevelt to benefit instream and out of stream uses through storage, conservation, and regional water management agreements. Water under this project, for new appropriations, is limited to municipal and industrial supply from the Columbia River main stream.

The Office of Columbia River (OCR) is aggressively pursuing water supply development opportunities throughout the Columbia Basin. You can find additional information at the OCR Web site at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/crwmp.html.

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of ground water (most commonly, single residential well owners) to construct wells and develop their water supplies without obtaining a water right permit from Ecology. For more information about the groundwater permit exemption, refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf.

The permit exemption may not be available to prospective water users in certain areas that have been closed to further appropriation because there is limited or no water available. Check with Ecology staff at the regional office for more information.

Additional options for finding a water supply include:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
- Processing your application with the Ferry County Water Conservancy Board.
- Proposing mitigation to offset the impacts to surface water and groundwater.
- Processing your application through the Cost Reimbursement Program. Refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf.

For more information on these and other options, refer to “Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing” www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1111067.pdf.

Pending water right applications in this watershed

Washington water law is based on the “prior appropriation” system, often called “first in time, first in right.” Applications for water from the same source must be processed in the order they are received.

Ecology asks anyone who needs a water right (new, change, or transfer) to submit the pre-application consultation form and meet with us to review your water supply needs and project proposal.

- Apply for a New Water Right
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

The map in this document shows some of the factors that will be considered when evaluating water right permit applications. Here are some information sources to assist you with your research:

- Locate and research water rights on land parcels anywhere in the state (Water Resource Explorer)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/info/webmap.html>
- Pending Water Right Applications by County
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/tracking-apps.html>
- Subscribe to a water right application RSS feed for a county or WRIA
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/wr_app_rss.html
- WRIA map showing the total number of water right claims, certificates, permits and applications
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright-wria-maps.pdf>
- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/waterresources/map/WCLWebMap/default.aspx>

For more information

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Spokane, WA 99205-1295
509-329-3400

*If you need this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Water Resources Program at 360-407-6872.
Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341*

